

Whitney Shiner
Office hours: Tuesday, 3:30 - 4:20 PM
Thursday, 12:00 - 1:00 PM

Office: Robinson B446
Campus phone: 3-4327
E-mail: wshiner@gmu.edu

RELIGION 631: Sacred as Secular in Modern Spirituality

Spring, 2008

Tuesday 4:30 - 7:10 PM

East 122

Purpose

This course examines the ways that cultures have constructed their views of the sacred, the role of religion in the "demystification" of the world, especially in western cultures, the growth of secularism in the west, and some of the ways in which the sacred nature of community has been asserted in a demystified, secular world. Since secularization has largely been associated with western culture, the course will particularly concentrate on Christianity, Europe, and America, but we will discuss as well ways in which other cultures have dealt with the secularization of the modern world.

By the end of the class, students should understand some of the major theoretical approaches to secularization and be able to evaluate those approaches in the context of American religion and religious cultures more generally.

Required texts

Mircea Eliade. *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*

Benedict, Abbot of Monte Cassino. *Rule of Saint Benedict in English*, Tr. by Timothy Fry

Max Weber. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Peter L. Berger. *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural*

Robert N. Bellah. *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial*

Texts are available at the campus bookstore.

In addition, there will be several readings available on e-reserve and 2-hour reserve in the Johnson Library.

Course requirements

CLASS PARTICIPATION: Attendance at lectures and thoughtful participation in discussions.

READINGS. All assigned readings should be done before class to aid you in understanding and participating in the discussion. In addition to readings listed in the syllabus, additional short readings may be assigned from time to time.

PREPARED ANALYSES OF READINGS. Students will be responsible for presenting an analysis of the day's readings at least twice during the semester.

PAPERS. There will be two papers that will address the issues raised in the course.

Evaluation of Student Work

Papers: 35% each

Class Presentations and discussion: 30%

Grading scale on tests is 90 -100 = A, 80 - 89.9 = B, etc. 88 - 89.5 = B+, 80 - 82 = B-, etc.

Papers grades are assigned numbers as B+ = 88, B = 85, B- = 82, etc.

I do not give A+ or C- for final grades.

Add and Drop Deadlines:

Last day to add full-semester courses: February 5, 2008

There will be absolutely no exceptions for this course.

Last day to drop full-semester courses: February 22, 2008

Accommodations for students with disabilities:

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Plagiarism Statement

Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving that person credit. You must give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes; a simple listing of books and articles is not sufficient. Notes referring to printed works must include page numbers or other common ways of directing the reader to the material. For example, references to the Bible should be made by chapter and verse, not page number. Student writers are often confused as to what should be cited. Some think that only direct quotations need to be credited. While direct quotations do need citations, so do paraphrases and summaries of opinions or factual information formerly unknown to the writers or which the writers did not discover themselves. Exceptions for this include factual information which can be obtained from a variety of sources, the writers' own insights or findings from their own field research, and what has been termed common knowledge. Common knowledge in this class includes anything that you should have learned from class lectures or reading the textbook. To assist your readers, you should provide a citation for any piece of information you think your readers might want to investigate further. Not only is this attitude considerate of readers, it will almost certainly ensure that you will never be guilty of plagiarism. (Statement adapted from plagiarism statement of the English Department at George Mason University)

Class Schedule

NOTE: Schedule may be adjusted from time to time

January 22	Introduction
January 29	Eliade, <i>The Sacred and Profane</i> Chapters 1-2
February 5	Eliade, <i>The Sacred and Profane</i> Chapters 3-4
February 12	Vine Deloria Jr., <i>God Is Red: A Native View of Religion</i> Chapters 4-6, on reserve
February 19	<i>Rule of Saint Benedict</i>
February 26	Max Weber, <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i> Chapters 3-4
March 4	Max Weber, <i>The Protestant Ethic</i> , Chapter 5 Harvey Cox, <i>The Secular City</i> , Chapter 1, on reserve
March 11	Spring Break
March 18	Peter L. Berger. <i>A Rumor of Angels</i> Chapters 1 & 2
March 25 First Paper due	Robert N. Bellah, <i>The Broken Covenant</i> , Chapters 1-3
April 1	Robert N. Bellah, <i>The Broken Covenant</i> , Chapter 4 Robert N. Bellah, <i>Habits of the Heart</i> , Chapter 9, on reserve
April 8	Walter Rauschenbush, <i>A Theology for the Social Gospel</i> Chapters 6-8. 11-13, on reserve
April 15	Mahatma Gandhi, selections, on reserve Deepa Mehta, <i>Water</i> (film)
April 22	Martin Luther King, Jr., selections, on reserve Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp, Jr., "Martin Luther King's Vision of the Beloved Community" http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1603
April 29 Second Paper due	Peter C. Pham, <i>Being Religious Interreligiously</i> Chapters 4, 6-7, on reserve